

# Middle-school students write to U.S. Marine

These are a few of the many letters written by seventh-grade students in Frances White's class at Magnolia Middle School. The students wrote to Lance Cpl. Todd Vick, 23, of the U.S. Marine Corps. He is the son of Charles and Wanda Vick of Kemper County; the family attends Highland Baptist Church in Meridian. Todd is a graduate of King's Academy in Meridian.

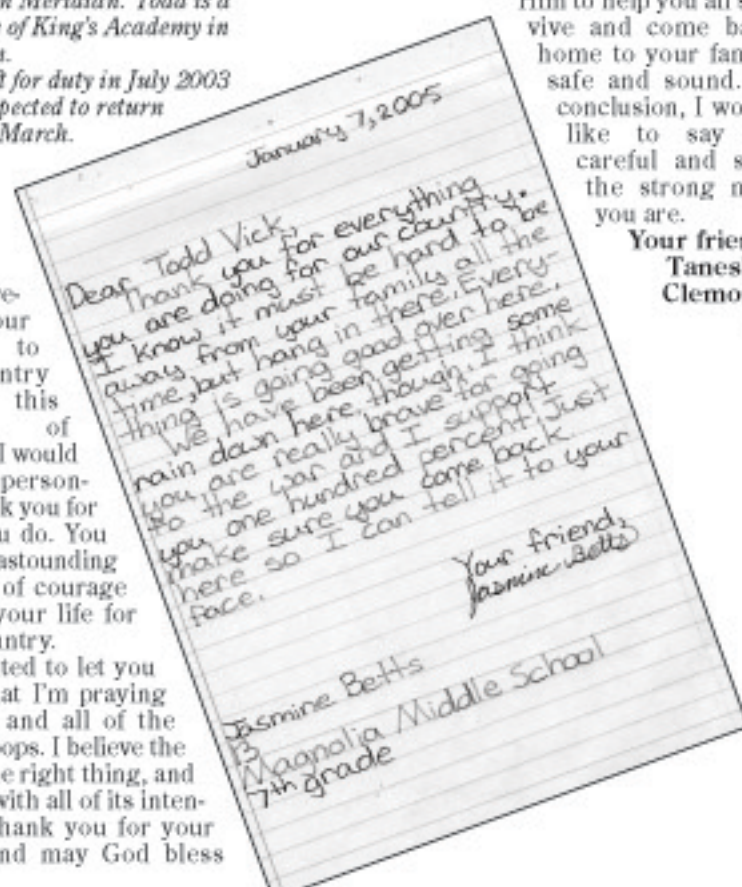
He left for duty in July 2003 and is expected to return home in March.

Dear Mr. Vick,

I appreciate your service to our country during this time of trouble. I would like to personally thank you for what you do. You have an astounding amount of courage to risk your life for your country.

I wanted to let you know that I'm praying for you and all of the other troops. I believe the war is the right thing, and I agree with all of its intentions. Thank you for your work, and may God bless you.

Sincerely,  
Andrew Blaine, 12



Dear Todd Vick,

Thank you for fighting for freedom and peace. I thank you for your time to fight for America. I know many nights you think about your family and wonder if you will be able to see them again. I think you are brave for risking your life. I pray to God every day for Him to help you all survive and come back home to your family safe and sound. In conclusion, I would like to say be careful and stay the strong man you are.

Your friend,  
Taneshia Clemons, 12



Todd Vick

Dear Todd Vick,

I really want to thank you for being so brave and going to Iraq to fight for both our freedom and their freedom. I am glad that there are people like you who have enough courage to go to another country and fight for others to have the freedom and the privilege to vote. I honor you for not just thinking of yourself, and going to Iraq to fight, so that they will have the same rights as the people in America.

And, I also want to let you know that I and a lot of other people are praying for you each and every day that you will come home safely and out of harm's way. I thank and I love you for being an American soldier.

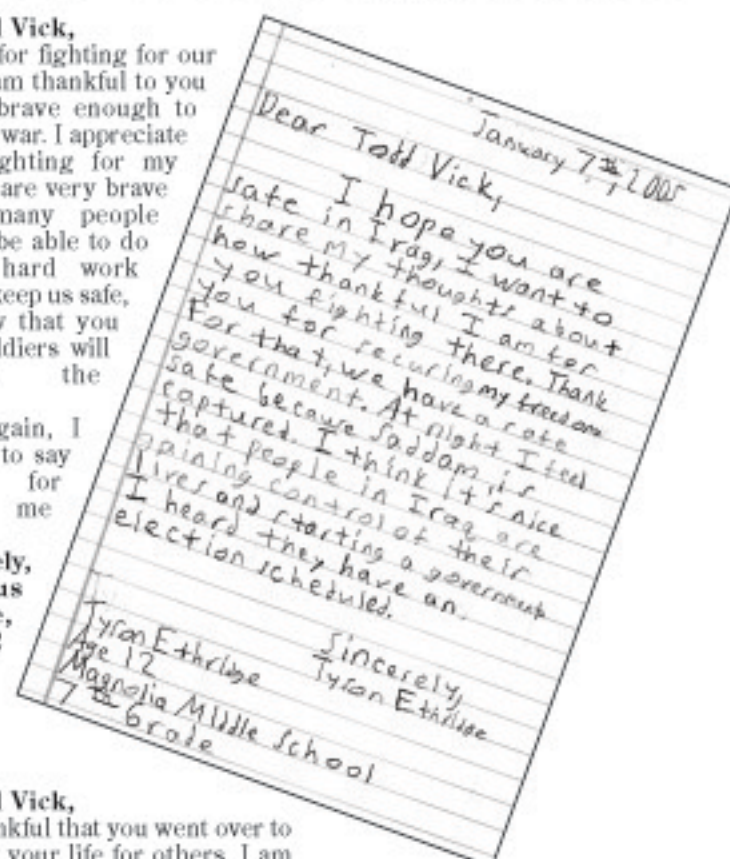
Sincerely,  
LaPorsha Lewis, 13

Dear Todd Vick,

Thanks for fighting for our country. I am thankful to you for being brave enough to fight in the war. I appreciate you for fighting for my safety. You are very brave because many people would not be able to do it. It is hard work fighting to keep us safe, but I know that you and the soldiers will overcome the obstacle.

Once again, I would like to say thanks for keeping me safe.

Sincerely,  
Quardarius Dubose, 12



Dear Todd Vick,

I am thankful that you went over to Iraq to risk your life for others. I am proud that you are helping to save all of those people who are trying to vote without being killed.

I am glad that you are so brave. I know that your mom and friends miss you a lot. I bet you that they are also very proud of you — and I bet you are very proud of yourself. We just pray to God that it all works out and you come home safely.

Sincerely,  
Monty English, 13

Dear Todd Vick,

I'm so glad that you're in Iraq fighting for the freedom and respect our country deserves. It's so brave of you to leave your home to fight for the United States of America. You and the other soldiers are doing great in Iraq. Thanks for the effort you put in to help save our country.

Sincerely,  
Candace Campbell, 13

## The Samaritan's Purse

Amanda Cody is a junior at Meridian High School. Her parents are Lisa and Clayton Cody and she has a younger sister, Jennifer. The family attends 15th Avenue Baptist Church — where Amanda got involved in the Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child.

She enjoys taking ballet and jazz classes at Suzie McGraw's School of Dance, and plans to attend Meridian Community College and the University of Mississippi to study physical therapy.

By Amanda Cody  
special to The Star

U.S. troops from all over the country are overseas risking their lives to try and make the world a better place.

Undoubtedly, they must have moments when they wonder if the fighting is even worth it, or if it is even making any difference. There are probably many times they do not feel appreciated.

At my church, we are active in a program called the Samaritan's Purse that reaches out — mostly to the children affected by the war overseas. It also touches the hearts of our soldiers, especially around Christmas. The project is called Operation Christmas Child and it's simple ...

In Step 1, people fill shoe boxes with needed items and send them overseas to places like Iraq. In Step 2, the soldiers fighting the war deliver the boxes to civilian children in their area.

The shoe boxes are wrapped in Christmas paper and include things like toys, books, toothpaste, candy and soap. Many of the recipients of these shoe boxes do not get anything else for Christmas and are delighted.

And, though small children may think of soldiers as objects of terror, the day they receive their shoe boxes is the one day a soldier is each child's best friend. To know such a simple gift can make such a huge difference in someone's life, especially at such a hard time, can make even the most cold-hearted, homesick soldier happier at Christmas time ...



PHOTO BY PAULA MERRITT / THE MERIDIAN STAR

### CARE PACKAGES

Ashley Kyler, left, Jennifer Cody and Amanda Cody prepare gift boxes at 15th Avenue Baptist Church for U.S. troops to give Iraqi children. The project was part of an outreach called Operation Christmas Child.

At church, we fill as many boxes as possible to send overseas ... The best part is that a few weeks later, we received letters about the little kids the shoe boxes helped ...

Every now and then, I find myself wondering if they have used up that toothpaste I put in there, or how many times they have read the book I put in the box. Operation Christmas Child is a great experience for the sol-

diers, volunteers and the children that receive the boxes.

The Samaritan's Purse helps the recipients of the shoe boxes, but it also helps the soldiers. Many of them are homesick and have become cold-hearted from the non-stop fighting.

For them to see a child's face light up as they hand him or her a shoe box must be one of the only things that can clear their minds of what is going on

around them, if only for a split second. The Samaritan's Purse and Operation Christmas Child are so beneficial, and I am very glad my church is involved with both of them.